

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2019

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We are writing to share our concerns regarding the imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Israel and are asking for an explanation as to why Israel has not been granted an exemption.


As you are aware, President Trump used the authority granted to him by Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to impose tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum from a variety of countries based on a determination by the Department of Commerce that such imports threaten to impair U.S. national security. The Administration has granted exemptions from its steel and aluminum tariffs to some of America's key allies, including South Korea, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada and Mexico, yet tariffs remain on imports from Israel.

Israel is a major strategic partner of the United States, as outlined by P.L. 113-296, and is one of America's strongest allies and most reliable partners in the Middle East. The United States and Israel have long enjoyed cooperation on a wide-range of issues that enhance, not threaten, U.S. national security, such as development of the Iron Dome missile defense system and countering subterranean terrorist tunnels. This cooperation demonstrates the deep trust and mutual respect that encompasses this vital relationship.

In 2017, Israel's exports of steel and aluminum represented only 0.0005 percent and 0.12 percent of total U.S. imports of steel and aluminum, respectively. While these numbers may seem small, the fact remains that the U.S. is a major trading partner for Israel and any disruption in the economic relationship will have a far-reaching impact. As such, after the imposition of tariffs, Israel's covered aluminum exports to the U.S. decreased by 31.9 percent. The Section 232 tariffs have created uncertainty for Israeli businesses and negatively impacted a key ally.

This is why we are seeking to understand the Administration's rationale to keep tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum from Israel. We do not believe imports of steel and aluminum from Israel are a threat to U.S. national security and are asking you to explain why Israel has not been granted an exemption.

Sincerely,


Bradley S. Schneider
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


David Schweikert
MEMBER OF CONGRESS